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## *Bastee* Settlements of Dhaka City, Bangladesh: A Review of Policy Approaches and Challenges Ahead

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### Abstract

Dhaka, capital city of Bangladesh, with a population of 12 million, receives 300,000 to 400,000 rural migrants annually. During the last three decades, while city population has grown over 7%, annually, *bastee* (slum and squatter) population of the city has grown from 1.0 million in 1990 to 3.4 million in 2005. Several policy approaches such as eviction, resettlement and upgrading, were adopted to deal with *bastee* settlements of Dhaka since 1975. These policies approaches were not very effective, because the scale of the problem is very large, which provides future challenges to deal with the *bastee* situation at a city-wide scale.

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**Keywords:** Bastee; city population; Dhaka; migration; policy approaches

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### 1. Introduction

Dhaka, the capital and primate city of Bangladesh, with an estimated population of 12 million (2007), is a fast growing mega-city in the world. The city receives an estimated 300,000 to 400,000 new migrants,

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mostly rural poor annually (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), 2001). In 1951, the city had a population of 335,928 and it grew at 10.7 million in 2001 and further to 12.0 million in 2007. The average annual growth rate during the last three decades was over 7%. Commensurate with the increase of population of the city, slums and squatters have also grown very fast. Baste settlements were formed in Dhaka in the first 15 years of Independence, during 1971-1986, at a rate of 20 settlements per year (Centre for Urban Studies (CUS), 1988) and then at a rate of 100 settlements per year (Prashika, 1996). In 1990, there were 1 million squatters in 2,156 clusters within the Dhaka metropolitan area and the number increased over the next 6 years to 1.5 million in over 2,800 clusters (Prashika, 1996). Between 1996 and 2005, the total slum population of Dhaka more than doubled from 1.5 to 3.4 million, while the number of slum communities increased by roughly 70%, i.e., from 3,007 to 4,966 (CUS, 2006, p.12). Two reasons account for the growth of baste settlements in the city. Firstly, the city has limited habitable land due to its topography, limited infrastructure and public services which failed to respond to the high demand; and secondly, the poor migrants who usually find job in the low-paid informal sector do not have enough income to pay for the housing in the formal sector. As a result, they look for cheaper housing in baste areas. So, a regular influx of rural migrants into the city contribute to the densification of slums that leads to further shelter crisis and deterioration of living environment. Several attempts/ approaches have been undertaken by the national government and local authorities since 1975 to address the slum/ squatter situations in the city. However, other than fragmented studies, no comprehensive study has been carried out to evaluate these attempts in order to arrive at appropriate policies. Therefore, the present study attempts to provide a coherent analysis of the policy approaches undertaken to deal with the baste settlements of Dhaka City and through it derive appropriate policy regime for their development.

## 2. Literature Review

Empirical studies on slum and squatter settlements cover a wide-range of issues. Globally, the intensity of slum problem has been highlighted by UN-HABITAT (2003) which reported that 1/3rd of the world population is living in slum settlements and if adequate measures are not immediately adopted the figure will reach 50% by 2030. The same report provides that the number of people living in urban slums in Asia and Pacific is as high as 498 million, about half of the total urban population. Wakley (2007) prepared a guide for UN-HABITAT and UN-ESCAP which provides information on various proven and innovative approaches and methodologies to address low-income housing at the programme and project level (and also city scale). CUS (2006) presents the results from a census and mapping of slums in six cities of Bangladesh in 2005. The report has generated a wealth of information about the location and basic characteristics such as population, households, as well as basic demographic, socio-economic and environmental descriptions of the urban slums.

Studies on urban poverty usually consider slum /squatter settlements as spatial manifestation of poverty where a significant portion of Dhaka city's dwellers live in informal settlements and are living below the poverty lines as the rapid growth of the city is not commensurate with its overall development (Hossain, 2008, p.80). World Bank (2007) through analysing the characteristics and dynamics of poverty, employment, land and housing, basic services, crime and violence study presents a comprehensive picture of poverty in Dhaka with the goal of providing the basis for an urban poverty reduction strategy for government, local authorities, donors and NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations). Abed (2007), while highlighted on the problems faced by the poor to get access to justice in both formal and informal legal system, commented that "access to justice is very important in order to find a way out of poverty" (p.3). Rashid (2007) analysed vulnerability of urban poor to health problems, due to poverty, under-nourishment, and little access to health care, and found that communicable diseases are a major problem in slum population. Begum and Moinuddin (2010) studied the relationship between housing and social

exclusion in the slums of Dhaka City through six key elements and found each of these elements related to the process and outcomes involved in social exclusion and these led credence to the drawing of spatial margin of social exclusion. Rashid (2009) reviewed policies, programmes and actions designed to impact the level of exclusion of people living in slum settlements of Bangladesh, with a focus on the health and rights of people living in these areas.

A number of studies have examined eviction of slums/ squatters and violation of human rights in Bangladesh and Dhaka City. COHRE (Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions) and ACHR (Asian Coalition of Human Rights) (2001) investigated forced evictions in Dhaka City during May-August 1999 and reports that “the homes of 44 settlements have been demolished in the past one year making 19,432 families or approximately 100,000 people homeless” (p.36). Rahman (2001) observed that there has been chronological eviction of bastees from 1971 upto 1995, which often violated the rules that require a 30 days notice to legally evict unauthorised occupants [vide Government and local authority land and building (recovery & possession) ordinance 1970], leading to the violation of human rights. World Bank (2007) study reports that from 1975 to 2004, there have been 135 instances of evictions in Dhaka City, despite that the country has adopted a National Housing Policy in 1993. Wakely (2007), reports that from January 2004 to June 2005, 27,055 people were evicted in 17 incidents; the reasons given were – environmental clean-up, building shopping complexes, land grab and infrastructure development. Paul (2006) studied a bastees demolition programme in 1999, which was abandoned due to severe resistance; nevertheless, the threat of eviction did not completely disappear from the minds of bastees dwellers; a overwhelming majority of respondents fear eviction and do not want to return to their villages.

Earlier studies on bastees in Dhaka city are mostly descriptive and highlighted on the living conditions of the dwellers. A number of studies by CUS (Centre for Urban Studies), although comprehensive, are mainly descriptive and generally the characteristics of the settlements are described as very negative regarding the possibilities of a consolidation process emerging (Wendt, 1997). Qadir (1975) studied three squatter settlements in Lalmatia, Babupura and Naya Paltan, and presents detailed breakdown of the poorly paid jobs performed by the members of squatter families and their environment that was lacking in most amenities.

Choguill (1987) presents a detailed examination of the planning and implementation of a small squatter resettlement at Bashantek, in Mirpur, Dhaka, which revealed a wide range of implementation problems that frequently arises when new communities are designed and built in a resource-scarce situation. Wendt (1997) studied four slums/ squatters, one each from Mohammadpur, Khilgaon, Embankment and Mirpur, to analyse the possibilities/ constraints on the emergence of a consolidation process in Dhaka’s slum and squatter settlements and she found that based on the elements determining the mobilisation potentials of slum and squatter dwellers, it is not possible to trace any potentials for the emergence of an autonomous mobilisation process in Dhaka’s slum and squatter settlements.

Kamaruzzaman and Ogura (2006) examined the aptness of the Bhashantek Rehabilitation Project (BRP), based on the affordability, cost recovery and replicability concept. Haque (2007) studied Dattapara resettlement project which was expected to rehabilitate 5000 families, but the project is not yet to complete due to coordination gap among different service providers.

Several studies have investigated the involvement of NGOs in slum/ squatter improvement programmes by highlighting their problems and limitations and also areas where their involvement may be encouraged. Rahman, (2005) investigated the reasons for the lack of NGO involvement in urban housing sector and on the enhancement of affordability through savings and micro-credit. Habib (2009) reports that NGOs are reluctant to work for better housing for the slum dwellers because of tight government regulations and controls on urban land and the fear of government evictions. However, some NGOs – NUK (Nari Uddog Kendra) and BRAC (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee) have come up to provide shelter solutions to female garment workers.

Despite the above issues, some studies report about the innovative initiatives or approaches, mostly adopted by the NGOs, to tackle service deficiencies and improve living environment of the slum dwellers of Dhaka City. Matin (1999) reports on the experience with social inter-mediation as an enabling strategy initiated by an NGO – DSK (Dustha Sastha Kendra), a partner of Water Aid Bangladesh, in gaining access to water for the low-income communities of Dhaka. Jinnah (2007) provides details of the planning and implementation of the project. Ahmed (2006) reports about an innovative approach developed to render water and latrine services to the rehabilitated Chanpara slum, nearer to Dhaka City, by using an approach of wealth ranking designed to categorise household's ability to pay for hand tube-wells and sanitary latrines. Waste Concern (2005) has developed a barrel type of composting for the *bastee* settlements which can help in achieving a behavioural change by minimizing littering of waste in slum, improve the environment and create a source of income for the poor slum dwellers. Tripathi (2008) while reviewing WATSAN (Water and Sanitation) activities in South Asia, reports about the success of community clustered latrines project managed by the CBOs (Community Based Organizations) of Parish Road slums in Mirpur, Dhaka, built by ASD (Assistance for Slum Development), a partner organization of Water Aid Bangladesh which have contributed to control water-related diseases such as diarrhoea and dysentery in the community.

From the foregoing review, it appears that there is a large amount of literature which has investigated different aspects of *bastee* settlement problems in Dhaka City in a fragmented manner. These studies require to be integrated to put forward the necessity of providing a coherent analysis for developing a policy regime to deal with slum situation of Dhaka city on a city-wide and national scales.

### 3. Objectives, Methodology and Study Area

#### 3.1. Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of the paper is to review the policies and approaches adopted to deal with slum situation of Dhaka city through obtaining the following objectives:

- Provide an overview of *bastee* settlements of Dhaka City;
- Review the policies and approaches adopted to deal with *bastee* settlements in the city;
- Provide examples from innovative initiatives involving pro-poor strategies and community initiatives in project planning and management, and
- Highlight critical issues and emerging future challenges and opportunities.

#### 3.2. Methodology of the Study

The study is based on secondary literature on slums and squatters. Fact-finding studies on slum living conditions and issues have been procured based both on general and individual case studies and reports. The following types of materials have been used for the study: (a) International mission/ visit reports; (b) Government reports; (c) Research reports; (d) Journal articles; (e) Theses/ dissertations; and (f) Newspaper articles/ reports.

#### 3.3. Socio-Economic Characteristics and Living Environment of Dhaka City Bastee Settlements

Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh is the largest city and it contains 34% of the national urban population of the country. Although *bastee* settlements existed in Dhaka for a long time but their growth accelerated after the liberation in 1971, due mainly to a high rate of rural migration annually. As of 2005,

the *bastee* population of Dhaka is 3.4 million, while the number of slum clusters is 4,966. Spatially, the distribution of slums remains similar during the last three decades, with more conspicuous growth in peripheral and suburban areas, due to land price differences between core and peripheral areas (CUS, 2006). Private slum property is on the increase compared to public slum property because the government has become more vigilant in guarding its land against squatters. Supply of semi-permanent (brick wall-tin roof) houses in slums has increased along with an increase in rent. Among the slum dwellers, 52.3% live in semi-pucca houses while 39.7% live in *kutchha jhupries* (flimsy impoverished dwellings) (CUS, 2006)..

Dhaka slums occupies only 5.1% of the city's total land (1,542 hectares) accommodating 37.4% of the total city population. While the overall gross population density for Dhaka is less than 121 persons/acre, the population density in slums is 891persons/acre, which is at least 7 times higher than the average for the city as a whole. Using a household income of Tk 5,000 (US\$715.00) per month as a reference of poverty line, the study (CUS, 2006) reported that the slums are generally the places of concentrated poverty, with 85.4% residents living below the poverty line in Dhaka city. The largest single slum in Dhaka was found at Korail in Mohakhali, with more than 100,100 people. Only 10% of slums had sufficient drainage to avoid water-logging during heavy rainfall. Over half were typically fully or partially flooded during monsoon. More than 50% of the slums had no fixed place for garbage disposal and no mechanism for regular garbage collection. However, 96% have access to electricity. A similar proportion had access to safe water. The Dhaka slum residents mainly rely on municipal taps for drinking water. Only around 5% of slum households did not share their drinking water source, while 40% shared it with more than 11 families. Almost 58% of the slums of Dhaka did have access to cooking gas. Most (65%) of Dhaka slums had no access to safe latrines. In nearly all slums, latrines were shared and in 50% slums, it was shared by at least 6 families. Roughly 6% of slums had experienced fire at some point. Around 7% slums had either been evicted at least once from their present location or were facing the threat of eviction. 56% of residential structures in the slums were made of low quality materials. Another 42% featured brick walls with a tin roof. Less than 1% of slum structures were made of materials that could be considered high quality. Over 70% of the slums had at least one NGO providing some sort of service to them (CUS, 2006).

## 4. Results and Discussion

The study investigated the formation and consolidation of *bastee* settlements of Dhaka City from different perspectives and the sections below provides the results of the study.

### 4.1. Approaches to Deal with *Bastee* Settlements in Dhaka City

Historically, a number of policy approaches were adopted to tackle the *bastee* settlements of Dhaka City and below are provided an assessment of those attempts and their effectiveness.

#### 4.1.1. Evictions

Slum populations in Dhaka City have mostly settled temporarily on public or private land and they are often evicted from their settlements. COHRE and ACHR (2001) in their fact finding mission on forced eviction reports that “the homes of 44 settlements have been demolished in the past one year making 19,432 families or approximately 100,000 people homeless” (p.36). The report concludes that wide spread forced evictions did indeed take place, in violation of both international and national laws and therefore urged the government to abide by its legal obligations to cease such evictions. Similarly, Rahman (2001) observed that there has been chronological eviction of *bastees* from 1971 upto 1995, which often violated the rules that require a 30 days notice to legally evict unauthorised occupants [vide



Government and local authority land and building (recovery & possession) ordinance 1970], leading to the violation of human rights.

From 1975 to 2004, there have been 135 instances of evictions in Dhaka City. While the number of slum dwellers evicted in each is not known, the list clearly shows that evictions have not slowed down since the adoption of the National Housing Policy in 1993 (World Bank, 2007). The large-scale eviction in Agargaon affected an estimated 40,000 slum dwellers. Wakely (2007), (based on [www.achr.net](http://www.achr.net)) reports that from January 2004 to June 2005, 27,055 people were evicted in 17 incidents of which 13 by government and 4 by private groups; the reasons given were – environmental clean-up, building shopping complexes, land grab and infrastructure development.

According to Wendt (1997) governments in developing countries usually justify evictions in one of the four ways - (a) to improve or beautify the city; (b) to clear dens of criminals; (c) for fear that health problems will spread from slums; and (d) clear land for development or to build public offices. Eviction has three basic impacts on those affected: physical, economic and psychological. While the eviction is a traumatic experience in itself, the most harmful impact of eviction may actually be the fear of being evicted. The fear makes people fatalistic; people lose confidence in themselves and discourages them from improving their housing. Paul (2006) observed that the overwhelming majority of *bastee* dwellers fear eviction and do not want to return to their villages. The study also found that past eviction and previous *bastee* experience, length of stay in Dhaka and having close friends, relatives who live in Dhaka are important determinants of respondent fear of eviction.

#### 4.1.2. Resettlements through Sites-and-Services Schemes

Resettlement through the sites-and-services schemes was attempted in three areas in Dhaka following the eviction of 173,000 *bastee* dwellers in 1975. The three resettlement schemes are – (a) Dattapara in Tongi, (b) Chanpara in Demra, and (c) Bhashantek in Mirpur.

The Dattapara resettlement project with a land area of 101 acres intended to resettle 5000 squatter families. So far 30 acres of land have been developed with site and service with a plot size of 600 sq ft (30'x20') each and 1016 squatter families are residing. The rest of the land has been occupied by unauthorised low-income poor families. At present, 7,787 low income families are residing there. The project is not yet complete and a few issues such as absence of titles of right of land, understanding gap between service providers and dwellers and above all, coordination gap among different service providers, are held responsible for the non-completion of the project (Haque, 2007).

The Chanpara resettlement project with a land area of 103 acres intended to resettle 5000 squatter families, is located near the village of Chanpara on the Lakya River about ten miles to the east of Dhaka. The land was originally acquired by the Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (DWASA), as a site for water treatment plant. Ahmed (2006) reports about an NGO initiative that led to environmental improvement of a slum.

The Bhashantek resettlement project was initiated in 1975 on 88 acres of land to create 4000 plots and resettle similar number of families, near Dhaka Military Cantonment in Mirpur. But in 1977 due to military strategic reason, it was relocated to low-lying land 2 km to the north-west with the UNCDF fund. The project was revised three times because each time it was about to be implemented, some faults such as costly land development techniques, incorrect embankment design (and its eventual collapse), overlooking project management and operation of the pumps, lack of co-ordination and leadership among many participating agencies were identified (Choguill, 1987, 1994). In the end, the project was completed, but it was highly subsidised warranting replication in the future.

According to one expert (Choguill, 1987), the planning carried out for the above three projects was inadequate. No effort was made to involve the squatters themselves in the solution and the entire problem of their economic livelihood seemed to either have been overlooked or underestimated. Dhaka City

Corporation had two relatively small sites-and-services schemes as well as a slum upgrading programme which had benefitted about 5,000 households. Those programmes were clearly not very extensive when compared with the scale of the problem in Dhaka.

#### 4.1.3. *Slum Upgrading Programme (SIP)*

Slum upgrading as a cost-effective approach has been widely used across many developing countries. According to Choguill (1994), a number of advantages of informal housing upgrading can be identified. First, it preserves existing economic systems and opportunities for urban poor. Second, it maintains the community structure and safeguards that already exist in the community group. In this way, the urban poor do not lose their jobs as they are engaged. Third, upgrading tends to be affordable than sites-and-services projects.

The Bangladesh government started implementing upgrading programmes in urban slums from mid-1980s with UNICEF. This programme is active in some 25 cities, including Dhaka. Originally, the programme had a strong physical component like improvement of drains and sanitation. It had no housing component. Later the World Bank (WB), the ADB (Asian Development Bank) and major NGOs like CARE supported some slum improvement without any housing component. Dhaka City Corporation itself established its own Slum Improvement Department in the early 1990s, but fund allocations to this department has always been very small, although over 1/3rd of DCC (Dhaka City Corporation)'s population lives in slums (WB, 2007). DCC has, however, implemented three SIPs - Shahid Nagar, Rosulpur, and Islambagh.

Siddique, et al. (2002) studied 18 SIP within Dhaka metropolitan area under implementation by the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) and report that upgrading of physical infrastructure under SIP included the development of footpaths and drains, the installation of tube-wells, latrines, street lighting, which led to improvement of slum environment and health conditions of poor and their quality of life. But maintenance of drains and refuse collection seems very poor in some slums. Social mobilisation, leadership training for people's organisations and possible linkages between women and existing legal aid-related institutions including tenure security need to be promoted in the SIPs. Once tenure becomes more secure, tenants are likely to pay more attention to improving their slums (p.101).

All programmes together have made very little impact on improvement of slums in Dhaka, due to the massive scale of the problem (WB, 2007). In spite of the good intentions behind the programmes, evaluations have shown that, at best, the projects only provided a partial solution to housing problems, because only an insignificant percentage of the urban poor benefited. Owing to the improvements, the price of land increased and pushed the poor to the fringe areas of the cities where employment opportunities are scarce. (Wendt, 1997).

One important aspect of SIP in urban areas of Bangladesh is the limited involvement of NGOs, both in number and activities (World Bank, 2007). NGOs have not been intensively involved in housing programme in Dhaka City; some NGOs work in urban areas, but they have prioritised income generating activities as a main focus (World Bank, 2007). Habib (2009) found that NGOs are reluctant to work for better housing for the slum dwellers because of tight government regulations and controls on urban land and distribution systems, and for fear of government evictions. In the past, some NGOs even filed High Court (HC) Cases against government on eviction issues. The HC directed the government not to evict slum dwellers without offering to re-house them, but these verdicts were not properly implemented. Because of these NGOs who might wish to provide credit and other support services, do not come forward (p.263).

Similarly, Rahman, (2005) by examining the status of involvement of NGOs in the socio-economic development of Bangladesh, identifies the reasons for the lack of NGO involvement in urban housing sector and on the enhancement of affordability through savings and micro-credit.

#### 4.1.4. *Back to Home (Ghore Phera) Programme*

In 1999, Bangladesh Krishi (Agriculture) Bank at the initiative of the government started the Ghore Phera (back to home) programme, which encouraged slum dwellers to return to their villages by offering them loans ranging from Taka 20,000 to Taka 150,000 and in some special cases Taka 3,00,000, to start income generating activities. The programme ostensibly aimed at alleviating urban poverty, reducing rural urban migration, and improving the city environment through encouraging the slum dwellers to leave their filthy and unhygienic bastees. According to General Manager of Bangladesh Krishi Bank, 1,746 families received loan and returned to their villages and have begun various income generating activities. One community leader commented that this programme coincided with forced evictions that took place in 1999 and the selection criteria was not transparent. They also reported that many people who had taken a loan and returned to the slums after some months. The community leaders also felt that the Government is wasting resources in conducting such a programme. If the people had security of tenure, they could improve their lives in Dhaka. The assumption that people living in slum settlements for decades would return to their villages, leaving behind extensive social and economic networks and employment opportunities, is unfounded (Rashid, 2009). On a similar context, Bhuyan, et.al., (2001) has observed that unless the benefits of migration can be generated in the rural setting even by a modest proportion, if not to the fullest extent, the idea of initiating and sustaining the process of reverse migration will not be translated into reality.

#### 4.1.5. *Bhashantek Rehabilitation Project – Public-Private Partnership (PPP)*

In 1998, the government allocated 47.9 acres of land in Bhashantek, Mirpur Section-15, Dhaka, under the name of Bhashantek Rehabilitation Project (BRP) with a view to constructing a modern satellite town for the bastei dwellers and the low income people of Dhaka City. Accordingly, a public-private partnership (PPP) agreement was signed between the Ministry of Land and North South Property Development Ltd. (NSPDL), on September 29, 2003. According to the agreement, NSPDL will implement the total project with their fund. Under the project a total of 15,024 flats will be constructed, of which 9,024 for bastei dwellers (Type-A: one room, 215 sq ft) and 6,000 for low-income families (Type-B: two room, 395 sq ft).

Kamaruzzaman and Ogura (2006) examined the aptness of the BRP, based on the affordability, cost recovery and replicating concept and found that BRP is poorly fitted to target population and it has a clear disparity with its aim which might not well curve the housing dearth of the real poor. A more sophisticated role of the state is necessary to provide the institutional support for well-functioning of property markets as well as to capture the opportunities high property markets value. Karmakar (2009) reports that hundreds of BRP flats constructed for the *bastei* dwellers have allegedly been allocated to the financially solvent people. No *bastei* dwellers have been able to purchase these flats. According to contract document, the Dhaka district administration would hand over the document of purchasing flat on the recommendation of the Land Ministry. But the NSPDL has been selling flats violating rules mentioned in the contract paper. So major problems may arise in handing over the flat purchasing documents.

#### 4.1.6. *Contracting for Health Services in Slum Settlements – Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)*

The concept of contracting out health service delivery to the NGOs and private sector through a formal competitive bidding process is a pioneering concept in Bangladesh to reach out to the poor living in slum settlements. Contracted NGOs are responsible for delivering a series of services including immunization, prenatal and obstetrical care, family planning, behaviour-change communication and curative care including management of tuberculosis and childhood illnesses. Contractors initially rented premises in those areas where health facilities have not yet been established and one of the major advantages of



contracting is that the service providers have the autonomy to manage implementation as they see best. This was expected to foster innovation and rapid adaptation to field conditions which ultimately lead to greater effectiveness and efficiency. The Urban Primary Healthcare Project (UPHCP) was initially implemented in Dhaka, Khulna, Chittgong and Rajshahi. Through a PPP, the city corporations expanded services by engaging NGOs. The first partnership agreements were signed in May 2000 and the second batch of eight partnership agreements was signed in mid-2001. Under this project, the UPHCP, established healthcare centres in low-income areas of the participating cities through which NGOs were subcontracted to provide primary healthcare services. The poorest women and children (beneficiaries) living in slum settlements were offered affordable and accessible quality primary healthcare services. The contracts were between the city corporations and the NGOs. There were 16 partnership agreements with 14 NGOs and two with the Chittagong City Corporation. In 2001, the coverage included 400,000 people in four city corporation areas. With assistance from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the city corporation has built 124 primary healthcare facilities owned by the NGOs providing services.

Very few studies have been undertaken to evaluate UPHCP programme which is now in its 2nd phase. Ahmad (2007) has identified several weaknesses of the programme – firstly, the accountability relationship is not transparent, the programme is costly due to high transaction, management and monitoring costs, existing institutional arrangement is difficult to expand without external assistance, and there is lack of a sense of ownership and trust in its continuity among the population. According to one author (Loevinsoh, undated), contract management has been a significant issue which involves problems with paying contractors on time, government procurement of supplies and irregular field supervision. The working hours of the UPHCP centres do not suit the slum dwellers. Most of the slum and street dwellers have limited access to health care because the centres open after they got out to work and close by the time they are back to their huts (The Daily Star On line, May 19, 2011). Even though the government is spending Tk 10.0 millions on an average every year under the UPHC Project, essential health care is a far cry for slum and pavement dwellers (The Daily Star Online, May 19, 2011).

It appears from the foregoing analysis that besides evictions, policy approaches adopted by government, local authority and NGOs are beset with many shortcomings which need ratifications. Moreover, the attempts have been meagre compared to the scale of the problem. A comprehensive city-wide approach involving the various stakeholders is essential.

#### 4.1.7. *Innovative Initiatives and Approaches*

Despite the fact that the above policy approaches have limited successes, some NGO initiatives towards slum upgrading may claim to be innovative even within the difficult environment in which they are operating in the *bastee* settlements. The description below provides some of those innovative approaches.

Matin (1999) describes the experience of a social inter-mediation as an enabling strategy in gaining access to water for the low-income communities of Dhaka. The study documents a process initiated by DSK, an NGO in Bangladesh, for the planning and implementation of a water supply programme through inter-mediation between the communities residing in poor squatter settlements and the formal water supply agency, DWASA. Jinnah (2007) reports how a local NGO – DSK (a partner of Water Aid Bangladesh) has been able to help the residents of some Dhaka City's *bastee* settlements in gaining access to public water and sanitation services.

Ahmed (2006) reports about an innovative approach developed to render water and latrine services to a rehabilitated Chanpara *bastee*, nearer to Dhaka City, by using an approach of wealth ranking to categorise household's ability to pay. Using poverty mapping, the study divided the slum households into four groups – better-off, middle class, moderately poor and hardcore poor, and then implemented the new cot-sharing strategy to set the amount of contribution for hand tube-wells and sanitary latrines.

Tripathi (2008) while reviewing WATSAN activities in South Asia, reports about the success of community clustered latrines project managed by the CBOs of Parish Road slums in Mirpur, Dhaka, built by ASD (Assistance for Slum Development), a partner organization of Water Aid Bangladesh which have contributed to control water related diseases such as diarrhoea and dysentery in the community. “This model can be adopted for squatter communities having congested housing with no land rights in South East Asia and in Nepal also (p.13-14).

Waste Concern (2005) has developed a barrel type composting for the slum and squatter settlements. A specially designed 200 litre perforated green coloured barrel with a cynical cover on the top and concrete base at the bottom is used for this method. Here waste is decomposed aerobically into compost within 3 to 4 months. The households sharing the barrel can also share the income from the sale proceeds of the compost and cost of one compost barrel can be recovered within a 2-year time period. Compost worth between Tk.600-Tk.700 (US\$10-11) can be produced each year. This model is successful in achieving a behavioural change by minimizing littering of waste in *bastees*, improve the environment and create a source of income for the poor slum dwellers.

While NGO involvement in housing programmes has been limited, some interesting projects do exist that could potentially be scaled up. A promising approach to providing shelter solutions to the poor is a comprehensive and cost-effective hostels for female garment workers run by Nari Uddyog Kendra (NUK). Recently, BRAC has adopted a similar type of project, with the support of the government. Those projects offer affordable solutions for the poor, particularly single women (World Bank, 2007).

#### 4.2. Critical Issues

Three critical issues that need to be tackled in confronting the urban shelter crisis in Dhaka City, particularly in controlling the future development of slums and squatters are, viz., (a) the availability of low-cost urban land which could be utilised for housing the poor; (b) the provision of access to affordable housing to help the poor to improve their housing; and (c) the organisation and participation of the community in planning and implementing low-income housing. Each of these issues exerts wide-ranging implications towards dealing with the slum and squatter problems of the city.

#### 4.3. Emerging Challenges

According to World bank (2007), the main challenges facing Dhaka in the next years with regard to land and housing for the poor are: (a) coping with a sustained arrival of poor migrants; (b) adopting more proactive planning policies to address the environmental risks; (c) finding a way to enforce property rights so that land grabbing does not take place; (d) ensuring that any eviction from public or private property is done in a way that recognise the rights of those affected; (e) improving the accountability of the public sector as a whole in the delivery of basic services; (f) security of tenure; and (g) sustainable housing. In order to meet the emerging challenges, upgrading of existing *bastee* housing stock and services, improvement of security of tenure, are at present, essential at a meaningful scale. Future housing needs must be met through a judicious, flexible and innovative mix of policies to release suitable land, provide incremental services and infrastructure development and provide technical and financial support to the poor (Wakley, 2007).

### 5. Conclusion

A number of basic policy changes are necessary to deal with slum situation of Dhaka city. Main reforms are needed in the policy and institutional framework. According to World Bank (2007), policy

changes directed towards creating an effective and enabling environment for improving the shelter conditions for the urban poor of Dhaka City are the following: (a) Implementing the NHP (National Housing Policy); (b) Strengthening public institutions to implement NHP; (c) Developing mechanisms for better accountability for land use and better coordination of services in the city; (d) Promoting coordination between DCC (Dhaka City Corporation), RAJUK (Capital Development Authority) -the planning authority, line ministries and utility agencies in urban projects in Dhaka; (e) Strengthening the performance of RAJUK; (f) Initiating pilot projects in poor areas in partnership with NGOs; (g) Improving legal and regulatory framework; and (h) Promoting NGO initiated innovative approaches. In addition, there is a need to initiate and promote surrounding secondary cities to diffuse growth of Dhaka city so that a part of existing bastee population and future rural migrants will be attracted to these cities.

In the end, it needs to be remembered that poverty is not the only reason for slums and inadequate infrastructure, these are also the outward sign of failed policies, bad governance, inappropriate legal and regulatory frameworks, dysfunctional land markets, unresponsive financial systems, corruption and last but not least – a lack of political will (Tannerfeldt and Ljung, 2006). Therefore, finding a solution to improve the housing conditions of urban low-income groups is a very complex task. The issue involves not only economic but also political problems for developing countries' governments. Regarding the latter, it is not only a question of the government's distribution of scarce resources among the population in urban areas, but also in some cases, governments' perception of urban low-income groups as generating economic, social and political instability (Wendt, 1997)

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